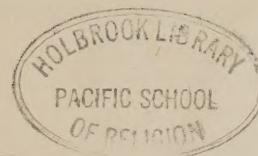




# The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● JUNE 1979



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# Cyclone Strikes Andhra Again

The coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh which had not yet recovered from the severe blow dealt by the storm and tidal waves of November 1977 were once again struck by a more devastating cyclone last month. One million people have been rendered homeless by this violent storm which struck the coasts of this state and parts of Tamilnadu on the morning of 12th May and with a fierce velocity of more than 160 km per hour swept away trees, houses, people, livestock and any other thing which came in its way. Hundreds of people and thousands of cattle, goats and other livestock have perished. The green fields with the standing crops ready to be harvested have been destroyed, along with the hopes of the people. Thousands of poor people in Prakasam, Nellore and Guntur districts are almost living in the open for the last one month exposed to the heat-wave sweeping the area. Their mud houses have crumbled in the flash floods, all their belongings washed away or damaged.

According to the survey and assessment teams sent out by the State Government, this typhoon has caused much more damage to property and crops than the November 1977 cyclone. The total losses are estimated to the value of Rs. 5,000 million. Standing crops in 22,000 hectares have been destroyed. About 16,000 acres of mango gardens were reported to have been damaged. Loss of crops in East Godavari district alone has been estimated at 10 million rupees. According to our aerial survey, approximately 400,000 houses in Nellore had either collapsed or had been badly damaged in 1500 affected villages. In Prakasam district 200,000 huts are reported to have been washed away.

The response of the Churches to this human agony has so far been expressed mainly through their auxiliary organisations like CASA, CARITAS, CRS, etc. A report put out by CASA says: 'CASA's emergency cell swung into immediate action and sent out four relief teams as soon as the cell was intimated of the emergency. These four teams are operating from Kandukuru, Karigiri, Ongole, Markapur, Perugonda, Podile and Cumbum in Prakasam and Nellore districts.

CASA's six point emergency relief programme has been set up with the close collaboration and support of the local Churches.

In the affected districts, 30,000 beneficiaries are receiving food daily. These victims are housed in seven camps respectively which are scattered all over the State. The scare of an epidemic looms large—a mass immunization programme has been commenced with the active co-operation of the local Christian hospitals. Daily 7,500 persons are being inoculated—so far 20,000 people have been immunized. 50,000 water



purification tablets have been distributed to the people to enable intake of pure water since the wells, tanks, and other water resources have been contaminated.

Under our MCH programme, 5,000 children are receiving milk. Plans are underway to provide the cyclone victims with blankets.

The Churches' Auxiliary for Social Action and many other voluntary agencies who have taken up relief work for the cyclone affected victims have been able to do so with the collaboration, co-operation and support of the State Official's who have also helped in co-ordinating the whole operation—Government machineries are working on a mammoth scale trying to rectify the damage to the essential services and communications media.

While the State is limping back to normalcy the victims look to the future with bleak, empty eyes.

Their's is a sorry lot—their hopes have been completely shattered and now they face the realities—CASA tries not only to render relief by way of food, clothing and shelter, it also helps to instil, in the popular, the hope to live again and realise their dreams.

While commanding the good work being done by CASA and other Church-related voluntary agencies, it should be noted with regret that the Churches by and large have remained silent and passive spectators in this poignant and tragic situation. If the local congregations and parishes are the vital cells of the Churches, there should have been vigorous action on their part to mobilize popular enthusiasm as well as the much needed material resources to meet the challenge of this human tragedy. The Churches are capable of stimulating dynamic action from the grass-roots level onwards to the top was convincingly proved when thousands of people were organized all over India to march in processions in protest against the discrimination shown to Christians of Scheduled Caste Origin and the 'Freedom of Religion' Bill. It is high time that the enthusiasm and dynamism generated on these occasions and the organisational framework that has come to be established in the wake of these agitations should be tapped and utilised to involve the local congregations and parishes more meaningfully and actively in bringing the much needed relief and succour to the hapless victim of the cyclone. This is a splendid opportunity for the Churches to prove that they are not narrowly communal, selfish and introvert, but their mission is to live for others.

# Freedom of Religion Bill, 1978

by Dr. J. R. Chandran, Principal, United Theological College, Bangalore, and President, Christian Association of India for Peace with Justice.

The private bill moved in the Lok Sabha by Shri O. P. Tyagi under the title *Freedom of Religion bill, 1978* has become a subject of much controversy and apparently Christians have become more agitated than any other religious community. Mass demonstrations have been held in Bombay, Calcutta, Bangalore, Madras, Trivandrum and many other places to protest against the bill and representations have been made to the President and the Prime Minister asking for the withdrawal of the Bill. Requests for the withdrawal have also been made through some State Governors and Chief Ministers. In spite of such representations the Prime Minister Shri Morarji Desai has been telling the delegations meeting him that he is in support of the bill. The only assurance he has given is that some modifications would be made to make it less objectionable. We also need to bear in mind that individuals and groups from all over the country have asked for the passing of the bill without any amendments.

The stated purpose of the bill is to prevent conversion of any person from one religion to another by the 'use of force or by inducement or by deceit or by any fraudulent means'. A person convicted of contravening the provisions of the bill will be punished with imprisonment of up to one year or a fine of up to Rs. 3,000. If the offence is committed against a minor, a woman, or a person belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe the punishment is greater, namely, imprisonment up to two years or fine up to Rs. 5000.

In the *Statement of object and Reasons*, Shri O. P. Tyagi recognises the constitutional right 'to profess practise and propagate' one's religion. He also agrees that conversion from one religion to another, done by free consent and will cannot be questioned. However he affirms that 'State protection is required where it is sought to be attained by threat, undue influence, allurement or wrongful inducement. He is also specially concerned about providing such protection to persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

All right thinking people will agree that conversion from one religion to another should not be sought or achieved through force, inducement or fraudulent means. In fact no church or Christian organization in India has been converting people by what might be described as the criminal use of force, inducement or fraudulent means. But the definitions given in the bill for 'force', 'fraud', 'inducement' are not the same as in the criminal code. They are defined in such a way that even the legitimate exercise of the Christian evangelistic mission or social service can be interpreted

as contravening the provisions of the bill. Preaching on the blessings of God coming to those who believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be interpreted as inducement. Many of the social services rendering medical aid or other forms of help to the needy may also be described as inducement. Preaching on the 'wrath' of God which is a legitimate biblical theme will come under the category of 'force'. Therefore it is obvious that if the bill is passed and becomes law, it will amount to abrogation of the fundamental right to propagate one's religion at present guaranteed in article 25 of the Constitution. As far as Christians are concerned preaching the Gospel or sharing the good news of Christ with others is an integral part of the practice of their religion and therefore the passing of the bill will also amount to interference with the fundamental right of Christians to practice their faith.

While the expressed purpose of the bill is to protect freedom of religion, in actual fact it will place undue impediments to freedom of religion. Freedom of religion as a fundamental right is guaranteed not only in our Constitution but in the constitutions of all enlightened democratic states. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations for which India has become a signatory has an article which reads as follows:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance' (article 18).

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights also has a similar clause:

1. Every one shall have the right to freedom of conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in a community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice' (article 18).

Shri O. P. Tyagi's bill definitely contravenes these clause of the Human Rights Charter of the U.N. in so far as it will interfere with the freedom of people to change their religion. Any kind of state control over religious conversion is interference with religious freedom. We

may also point out that it is the present state policy rather than the evangelistic and missionary activities of the Church which is guilty of use of force and inducement for religious conversion. The policy of withdrawal of rights and privileges given to members of Scheduled Castes from converts and the restoration of the rights when converted back to Hinduism implies the practice of both force and inducements in relation to religious conversion and seriously interferes with freedom to have or to adopt a religion of one's choice. One might also ask why such a concern has developed only in relation to freedom of religion. Freedom to hold opinions and beliefs in other spheres such as politics and economics is not in any way less important or consequential for human well-being. Further, the use of force, inducement and fraud is more common for the purpose of making political converts with quite serious consequence for society and for our national life. Therefore, if at all any legislation is needed it is to protect people from conversion to socio-political ideologies by the use of force or other unfair means and also to protect people from unfair methods for securing their votes in political elections.

It is, however, important to see the bill in the right perspective. For quite a long time the practice of conversion by the Christian missionary movement has been resented by a section of Hindu Orthodoxy. The Niyogi Commission in Madhya Pradesh, and the passing of Freedom of Religion Acts in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh are the political expressions of such resentments. Whereas the High Court of Orissa declared the Act *ultra vires* of the constitution, the Madhya Pradesh High Court upheld the Act of that State. The Government of Orissa referred the case to the Supreme Court which in 1977 ruled that in so far as the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution do not include the right to convert the Act of the Orissa Government does not contravene any of the provisions of the Constitution. The Supreme Court ruling makes a distinction between the right to propagate and the right to convert. This is too fine and sophisticated a legal distinction and in substance makes the right to propagate rather purposeless and meaningless. It is obvious that the Supreme Court should be asked to review the ruling.

In Arunachal Pradesh religious discrimination was practised for several years against the free functioning of Christian churches while giving full freedom for the operation of Hindu Missions such as the Rama-Krishna Mission. Finally a bill was passed in the name of Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Bill, 1978 for the stated purpose of protecting the freedom of religion for the indigenous people, but obviously directed against the freedom of Christians to practise and propagate their faith. The events after the bill became an Act of the State following the President's assent have proved the discriminatory character of the Act. Hindu Missions are granted free access into Arunachal Pradesh while Christian evangelists from India are not permitted to enter. Further no satisfactory action has been taken against attacks on Christians and the demolition of about 40 churches. It was when representations were made against the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act that the Prime Minister was reported to have expressed his conviction that a similar Act was needed for the whole country.

We need to understand the move towards such control of religious conversions as the result of a combi-

nation of forces such as the revival of Hindu Orthodoxy and the growth of reactionary elements in political leadership. The Hindu revival movements like the RSS have a legitimate role in the development of the religious life of Hindus. But their attempt to impose their concept of religious freedom on the rest of the Indian People if unchecked will lead to a serious corrosion of the secular character of our democracy. Shri Deoras, the President of the RSS has described the RSS and Hinduism as genuinely secular on the ground that they do not seek conversion of people from one religion to another. According to him only those religions which practise conversion are a threat to secularism. At the same time he also wants Christians and other non-Hindus to return to the Hindu fold. Obviously for Shri Deoras a secular India is identical with a Hindu India. Certainly this was not the understanding of the framers of our Constitution when they wanted a secular democratic society for India with equal freedom for all religions irrespective of how they interpreted the professing, practising and propagating of their faith. Shri O. P. Tyagi's bill also smacks of Hindu revivalism in that it has a paternalistic tone in the concerns for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The linking up of the concern for the cow with Hindu religious sentiments is another example of Hindu revivalism being permitted to corrode secularism. While legislation for cow protection is good for the country's economy, legislation for total ban of cow slaughter purely to satisfy religious sentiments is a retrograde step, which will have serious consequences for our secularism, economy, religious harmony and national image.

With this understanding of the context of the Freedom of Religion Bill we certainly have to continue with our demand for the withdrawal of the Bill and also to resist the passing of the Bill. At the same time we should avoid the danger of our reacting which might be harmful. Already demonstrations have been used by a major part of the India press as well as political leadership to tell the public that Christians are the only people opposed to the bill and that is so because only Christians are guilty of using force and other unfair means for proselytation. Through our demonstrations, representations and statements we have also given the impression that we are concerned mainly about the future of the Church and the Christian Mission in India. It is important that we clarify the purpose of our protest against the bill. We are not seeking more religious freedom than what we want for people of other religious faiths. Through our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the Christian Mission of evangelisation we are committed to work for a just and democratic society in which freedom of belief and religion is equally guaranteed to all. We have great respect for the tradition of religious tolerance which characterised Indian culture from the Vedic times and particularly after Asoka and provided the real basis for the secularism of the Constitution. We also appreciate that voices protest against the bill have been raised by many belonging to other faiths also, including Hinduism. Therefore our protest against the bill should/in collaboration/be with people of other faiths and all who are concerned with preserving and strengthening the secularism of our society and making a firm stand against the present trends towards reaction and obscurantism. Let us not fight the bill only in the name of Christian self-interest, which might easily expose us to the danger of falling into Christian communalism which is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, in humility we need to acknowledge that some of the methods used for evangelism by some Christian groups, however sincere they may be, have caused offense to our non-Christian brothers and sisters. While evil and injustice have to be exposed and condemned there is no justification for offending the religious feelings of other people by making unfair comparisons or dogmatic assertions about the doctrines of the Christian faith. Though it is possible that people may reject the Gospel, we need to bear in mind that many non-Christians have also been irritated and offended by the manner in which the Gospel has been presented to them. A great deal of the wrong presentation may be attributed to the ignorance and naivete of the evangelists. But there has also been a spirit of arrogance, authoritarianism and exclusive possession of truth on the part of the evangelists which people of other faiths have resented and is in fact, contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ. One of the criticisms often leveled against the Christian mission is about the role of foreign missions and the involvement of the Indian churches with churches overseas. On this issue we cannot make any compromise because of the global concern of the Gospel and the consequent ecumenical character of the fellowship of the churches. We need to explain this to our critics from the other faiths in India, so that they understand and appreciate the universality of the Christian faith. At the same time we need to make clear that our commitment to the ecumenical fellowship in no way conflicts with or weakens our loyalty to our country and national interests. In fact, some of our great leaders like Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru had also advocated India finding greatness through playing her rightful role in the growing forms of interdependence and partnership of the global community of nations.

Thirdly, in our fight against the bill we should also avoid the danger of losing sight of the national priorities. We need to ask ourselves whether as Christians we have been sufficiently concerned about national priorities, or whether we get worked up for agitation only when our communal interests are touched. Christian churches and missions do have a very high record of humanitarian services in different fields. But that is quite different from the whole Christian Community in India making a stand on issues. It is unfortunate that sensitive issues such as religious freedom, cow slaughter, Hindi, etc. have been raised at present and people are roused to spend too much of their energies and emotions on these issues when the issues which really determine the quality of life for the millions are different, namely, removal of poverty and oppression, abolition of unemployment, and related socio-economic issues. It may even be that some diversionary tactics are deliberately used by those holding economic and political power to prevent the mobilising of forces against the real problems. In any case when people are made preoccupied with the politicising of marginal issues of religion, language, prohibition, cow slaughter, and the like those with vested interest in continuing the present unjust and exploitative socio-economic structures will be able to remain in power unchallenged or only very feebly challenged. Having demonstrated the possibility of Christians making a united stand at the national level on the issue of freedom of religion let us give some more serious thought to the national priorities and make a determined stand for justice, taking up the cause of the oppressed sections. In this also we need not act alone but can seek the co-operation of people of other faiths. What is im-

portant is the adoption of a policy for determining the priorities of concerns for which Christians should agitate.

Fourthly, whatever be the outcome of the Freedom of Religion Bill, the Christian calling for evangelisation cannot be compromised. We believe that the commission to preach the Gospel and to make people disciples of Jesus has come from the Lord himself and it is through the Holy Spirit we witness to the powers of the Gospel. In the early centuries the spread of the Church was not dependent on permission of the state to preach and to convert. On the contrary the Christian missionaries and evangelists were faithful to their calling in spite of opposition from the State. The present occasion therefore challenges individual Christians as well as Christian congregations and churches as a whole to exercise self-examination about their commitment to the evangelistic calling. Have we been faithful to this calling? Do we participate in evangelisation only if state laws are favourable? In whose authority do we preach, call people to repentance and baptise as members of the Body of Christ? May we take the present situation as one which God transforms into an opportunity for reaffirmation of our calling to follow Christ and to participate in the evangelistic mission trusting in the power of the Risen Lord and the Holy spirit.

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## Announcement

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF INDIA

has opened separate a Bank Account  
with the INDIAN BANK, Dharampeth, Nagpur  
styled as,

National Christian Council

of India

Human Rights Account  
(S.B. No. 2718)

Your contributions directly to the above

Account by cheques, drafts, money orders  
are requested.

The proceeds will be used for filing a  
petition in the

Supreme Court of India challenging the  
validity of the FREEDOM OF RELIGION ACT

in  
Arunachal Pradesh etc.

# Training Missionary Congregations— Vellore Style

It was a real *Thiru Vizha*, holy festival, on the sandy banks of Ponnai River near the Anaicut. Christians from ten parishes of the Vellore Diocese gathered there for the 85th year, numbering more than 30,000 for a three-day celebration of praise, and preparation for renewal. They came in bullock carts, and in buses, or walking long miles as families or groups. They came carrying sacks on their heads with rice and vegetables with vessels for cooking the food they needed, camping style. The roads at the festival site were packed with stalls selling everything from ribbon and balloons to coconuts and cooking pots, from cinema songs to Bible verses, from pictures of the Holy Virgin to those of Thirupathi Venkateswara. One wouldn't suspect that it was a Christian festival, but for the sight of white cassocked *padris* around and the symbols of the cross in the mandapam styled Church at the centre. This is the way these Churches celebrate jointly their harvest festival every year. Some of the pastors look forward to this as an occasion to collect enough money to pay the assessment, others see it as an occasion of rural evangelism. Some Christians look forward to this as an occasion of paying their vows to their God and making their annual pilgrimage to the sacred spot. Others see this as an occasion of Christian witness, conversions and baptisms. Yet others use this as an occasion to meet friends and relatives and even fix marriages—A bundle of motives and interests as all human situations are.

Indigenization of which everyone speaks, was not just an idea, but a reality at Ponnai. The village festival and related customs had been totally taken over by the Christians, as Old Israel had taken over the festivals of Passover, unleavened bread and ingathering. I wondered if it would be possible anywhere else in the CSI to indigenize a festival in such style and scale, and whether, if the church would have accepted this if the missionaries had not started it. The fact that the early missionaries of the Reformed tradition in this part of the country had such an understanding and appreciation of the social customs and offered an alternative to the new converts who had to be weaned out of their Hindu festivals and customs is something that one admires today. Not just baptism of persons, but baptism of social customs and religious practices, seems to have been their achievement.

I was not quite prepared when a person came with his festive-looking bullocks and wanted me to offer thanks for their healing. The Lord had healed the

bullocks when the owner had made a vow of offering at the Anaicut festival. He wasn't satisfied with a prayer either. He insisted on my marking their foreheads with the sign of the Cross. I was told that there are cases when sick children are vowed, healed, and then 'auctioned' at the festival and redeemed by paying the auctioned value. There was the case of a wife two years ago who vowed to offer her husband in return for healing from a deadly disease and then redeemed him after auction. Indigenization meant here christening the festival, by putting new content into an old tradition. The central event in this festival was not the procession of deity, but giving thanks to the Lord of the harvest, through the early morning Eucharist. The deity worshipped was not the local village goddess but Jesus Christ, the Lord who is the healer and giver of life. They still kept some of the old practices like procession with fire torches, bringing offerings of fowls and goats and cows. However, in some people's minds sub-Christian and magical understandings of Church, worship, prayer and pilgrimage were also present. Indigenization is never a pure phenomenon, and is always in need of education for re-interpreting old customs in the light of the Gospel.

What is significant in Vellore Diocese is that indigenization serves the purpose of evangelism also. The festival is the occasion when mass baptisms happen. Pastors keep record of those they baptise and refer them to local churches for Christian nurture. The Gospel has taken roots within the social milieu of the people. It is easy for villagers to join the church, for, by becoming Christians they need not cut themselves away from a familiar cultural pattern, and social life.

Vellore Diocese has a programme for doubling the number of Christians in the Diocese within a period of five years. Each village church is given the target of converting the whole village or the neighbouring villages by systematic and sustained evangelistic work. Personal ties of friendship and blood relationship will facilitate this process. There are visible results already. The Bishop told me that he would be baptising in the next few weeks about 80 persons in Yercaud, 100 persons in Palmaner, 200 in Deenabandupuram, 500 persons in Chinnampalli, 250 persons in Atmagur and 500 persons in Nagari parishes. He conceded that not all of them had understood completely the implication of the Christian faith, and that their commitment to the Lord was not total. Sociological consideration weighed heavily with them. They find a new status in society and a new identity as belonging to a more liberated, enlightened and progressive social group. Theological reasons and sociological reasons are mixed. Is there a theology of sociology of conversions? The transformation of the social status of groups because of conversion to the Christian faith has surely theological significance. Conversion is not something that happens just inside the hearts of individuals. It has corporate and material dimensions. Transformation and liberation of social groups is as important a consideration as personal transformation and salvation. Both have spiritual dimensions. One can't say that such baptisms are for the wrong reasons. Once families and villages become Christians, affirming their basic allegiance to Christ, then it becomes the duty of the Church to bring them up in Christian nurture and experience. The Bishop was right, when he pointed out that this

was the manner how some of our forefathers became Christians. If the missionaries had not baptised them with their incomplete faith, some of us wouldn't have been given the opportunity to grow into greater knowledge and maturity in the Christian faith. M. M. Thomas makes a relevant point in this regard in his book, *Salvation and Humanization*. C. F. Andrews found out from some of the converts of his time that the main reasons for their conversion was not individuals salvation but the sense of liberation from caste bondage and a sense of belonging to a new brotherhood. Andrews wrote: 'I do not imply by this that the sense of individual need of salvation is absent or that the experience is necessarily typical. But in such instances as these, the purely personal aspects develop later. The community is the primary concern'. This is still an important consideration in the villages today.

Together with the programme for evangelism, there is also a multi-sectoral development programme being implemented by the Diocese. The Rev. Joseph John explained that three things were emphasised in this programme. (i) The living standards of not only individual persons, but of the total community must be raised. (ii) That persons be trained not to be satisfied with charity, but struggle for human dignity and human rights, in some cases, even to create revolts in unjust situations. (iii) That the whole programme be planned by the people themselves. The programme includes areas of health, housing, child care, family planning, adult education, etc. A group of education volunteers and 'barefoot doctors' will be the animators in this process. The villagers must be offered the whole gospel for the whole person and the whole society. This comprehensive programme of evangelism and development seeks to achieve that goal.

The persons who are to play the key role in this comprehensive programme are the village *sabai maniams*. These are natural village leaders, often illiterate but because of their wisdom and experience, are chosen by the village churches and appointed by the pastorates to assist the Catechists. They are the Christian counterparts to the village officers who have been given civic responsibilities by the Government. They give their service on a voluntary basis. The teacher-catechists and *sabai maniams* were the rural Church's leaders. The Catechist could be transferred from one village to another, but the *maniams* continue to be associated with one village and exercise a certain unrivalled authority and involvement. Times have changed, there are only a few teacher-catechists now. And so the village *maniams* have to be trained to play a greater role in the life of the village church. They are now responsible for Sunday services, organizing men's work, women's work, youth work, children's work, evangelism, festivals, developmental work, etc. The diocese has a scheme to train such persons to be more effective in this ministry. During the festival, there were special sessions when the 'maniams' were commissioned to such a ministry. 'They are servants of God; servants of His people; they are the ministers of the Church' says a document on this theme. Through their work rural churches rather than sophisticated urban congregations will become the centres of evangelistic revival.

The *maniams* have also the responsibility to train the congregations for self-support. A simple scheme was explained to them by the Rev. Joseph John.

There are about 8000 families in the diocese. Each family is requested to plant two coconut trees to be bought at a concession rate of Re. 0.50 per seedling, supplied by the agricultural farm of the diocese. The families take the responsibility to look after them and tend them for a period of 5 years till the trees start yielding. The produce of one tree goes to the Church and that of the other goes to the family. At the rate of each tree producing about Rs. 100 per year, and 50% of it going to the Church, the income to the church can be considerable. Half of this would go to the diocesan fund and the other half to village developmental fund. Surely there will be difficulties in implementing this scheme and the net profit may be less than what is now calculated. But the scheme holds promise in the type of training the diocese hopes to give to congregations for self-reliance. Not mission boards and development agencies but village churches and family units will become the 'donor agencies' to the diocese. Training for economic self-reliance is a necessary part of training missionary congregations.

One of the things that impressed me at Ponnai was the life style of Church leaders. The pastors lived with their Church members throughout the festival. The Rev. Singaram Dorairaj, the secretary of the festival, exhibited a welcome rural touch about him, both in appearance and in attitude. The simplicity, the commonness, and the accessibility of the Bishop was charming. He spoke in a language that spoke to His people. He communicated so powerfully his zeal for evangelism and his conviction that the 50,000 membership can increase to 100,000 in 5 years. In these days of inevitable bureaucracy, business, and overwork, also among church leadership, the simple fact that the Bishop was with the people all the time, — many of them wanted the bishop to pray for them giving him little time to rest — was a symbolic expression of the truth that the whole people of God, Bishop, clergy and laity, are the missionary people.

Charismatic leadership was evident at the festival. The Rev. Joseph John possesses an intimacy with the people and exhibits a concern for them, rarely found these days. His capacity to identify himself with the people is a marvel. Because of this he has established a unique relationship with the villagers. They addressed him affectionately as 'Ayyappa', 'guru-father'. I was told that he doesn't wear sandals on his feet since an incident in which a harijan was illtreated for walking through the high caste village with sandals on. His feet won't need sandals as long as even one of his brothers and sisters was prevented wearing sandals. Empathetic identification is a mark of truly great leadership !

The meditations at festival were around the theme, Holy Spirit, inspired by Bishop Gill's book published by CLS as lenten meditation for this year. We learnt through the Bible Studies that the Holy Spirit gives His church a new power, which manifests itself in charismatic leadership to save His people, which raises prophets with courage to condemn evil and injustice, which fosters groups to grow in unity and mutual understanding, which enables the Church to proclaim the Gospel effectively and which encourages Christians to share commonly their material goods. The Holy spirit gives His Church new gifts, who are apostles who witness to the resurrection, believers who can do

miracles of healing through prayer and health care, persons who serve as deacons or committee members, persons of faith who speak in tongues and pray fervently, and above all, Christians who possess the gift of love. The *new life* in the Spirit means, a life of being born as new creation, a life of close relationship to God as His children, a life of freedom from the power of sin and death, a life of holiness unto

Christ, and a life that bears the fruits of the Spirit. The life of Christians and Christian congregations stands under the need of constant empowering by the Holy Spirit. It is not our strategies and programmes, but the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit that create missionary congregations.

SAMUEL AMIRTHAM

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# Counselling as an Aspect of Mission (India)

B. J. PRASHANTHAM\*

I would like to share my views on the subject in two parts. The first part will deal with the objectives, programmes, etc. of the Christian Counselling Centre, which started here in Vellore in 1971 as an ecumenical endeavour of eight churches in India. At present this is the only Centre of its kind in all of India. In the second part I will discuss my understanding of the meaning of all this to Christian Mission in Asia.

## Facts about the Christian Counselling Centre

The Christian Counselling Centre Governing Board consists of representatives from the following Churches :

Church of South India

Methodist Church in Southern Asia

The Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church

The India Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church

The Church of North India

The Mar Thoma Church

The Roman Catholic Church, represented by the Catholic Diocese of Vellore.

The work of the Centre is organized to achieve the following goals :

— to facilitate personal growth so that distressed persons may experience a healing change in themselves and their relationships ;

— to facilitate growth in human relations and counselling skills so that trained persons may contribute to the promotion of healthy personality in society ;

— to do research on service and training programmes so as to increase basic knowledge and skills in promoting mental health.

Our work is grounded in our understanding of persons and society as revealed in Jesus Christ. We are open to all available resources of the Behavioural Sciences, particularly the theories and methods of all systems of counselling and psychotherapy which are consistent with this understanding.

Our therapeutic and growth services are available to persons of all strata of society, but we place high value on personal growth and change in becoming a counsellor. We are committed to experience-based learning as our educational approach. We constantly seek to make our training relevant to the changing needs of our culture and country.

The training programmes are open to caring persons regardless of social status and religious affiliation.

The service, training and research programmes of the Centre reflect these general principles. We have a team of seven professional people trained in counselling and psychotherapy. They are in great demand all over the country. The staff of this institution have conducted programmes in Human Relations and Counselling for Churches, Hospitals, Universities, Colleges, Tata Institute in Bombay, Indian Airlines Managers, and for government of India undertakings such as Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, Trichy, as well as their other branches, the Reserve Bank of India Staff College and staff colleges of nationalised banks.

Each year the Christian Counselling Centre offers various programmes :

— Basic training in Counselling (8-Week residential course) This is offered four times each year.

— One-month training for Community Development Workers in Human Development, once each year.

— Advanced Professional training in Human Relations, Counselling and Psychotherapy—a one-year Diploma Course.

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— Counselling and Psychotherapeutic service to individuals, couples and families to facilitate personal growth and healing in their relationships.

— Seminars and workshops in many parts of the country for interested groups and organizations. At present we are conducting 40 such seminars every year across the country exposing in all programmes about a thousand persons in the basics of Human Relations and Mental Health.

### Some Reflections

It will be evident that what has been described above is a ministry of healing of persons which is innovative in this part of the world and which is being sought after by many. In fact the demand on our services is so much that we are unable to cope with it.

More than 75 per cent of those who have made use of the services so far are persons of faiths other than Christianity. We see in this the possibility of being a servant of the nation.

There are other needs of the people that are not met through counselling and we recognise that and see the reality of various approaches meeting various aspects of human need. Lord Jesus Christ described his mission in terms of *proclaiming* the good news of God and healing all manner of ailments including mental problems. When he sent out the 70, he commissioned them to go out and proclaim the good news and heal. Even today the aim of the Church is to proclaim the good news of God and to *heal*. These two aspects of *proclamation* and healing are not identical but they are not separate either. The institute at which I work specializes in promoting the ministry of healing among people. Counselling is one way to promote healing of persons.

Professor Neeki of New Delhi in a recent article has stated that there are 8 million persons in South East Asia known to be in need of active psychiatric treatment. There are also problems of suicide and drug abuse. There are changing family patterns, the struggles to adjust to the growing urbanization and industrialization, with their challenges to the quality of interpersonal relations. There are so few professionally trained mental health workers. In fact fewer than 500 professional Mental Health Workers are available for more than 650 million population of India. Prof. Neeki mentions the need to recognize the importance of indigenous healers and help them to function in more effective ways. He mentions the need for training many para-professionals. He mentions child-care services and geriatric services among the new areas that need attention. He refers to mental health practices like mobile psychiatric units in Thailand, the rural clinics in Indonesia and tented camps with mental hospital compounds in India as a few of the ways mental health services may be extended. There is great need for counselling and guidance among young people in schools and colleges. All these challenges provide great opportunity for Christians and Christian caregivers to get themselves trained in the basics of Human Relations and Counselling and to become agents who promote healing of persons—which is a way of co-operating with God in the spirit of the prayer 'Thy Kingdom come'. Let me try to illustrate.

In one of my travels I met a man who looked very old. As we were discussing the whole question of grief, he told me that he was actually only about 50 years old. He volunteered to share with me why his hair had turned grey and why his health had declined. Some three years ago, he lost his wife. He was in great sorrow and he cried a lot. A well meaning missionary lady who came to console him said to him 'Don't cry; you have faith in God; she is with the Lord', etc. etc. After hearing this he thought that he would be showing lack of faith if he end cried. He closed up. Then on he was bottling up his grief. Very soon his health began to deteriorate. Two years later he was admitted to a hospital complaining of severe stomach pain. The doctors could not find any physical cause for his illness. One day while he was in the hospital a wise physician came, put his arm around him and enquired as to what was going on inside him. This was the first time after the death of his wife that he had an opportunity to share his sadness and grief, and cry in the presence of a warm, empathetic and accepting individual. This brought him great relief and his stomach pain also subsided.

I can give you scores of instances like this. If we go to our villages, we find that there is such a freedom among our people to express their grief. They may on occasion overdo it. But it is unfortunate that in some Christian circles people allude to the scriptures, 'Do not grieve like those without hope' a more appropriate word of comfort would be 'Grieve like those with hope'. No matter how religious a person is, he is also a human being. He is hurt because he loves. We must remember that Jesus Christ wept when his friend Lazarus died. I am sure that it is futile to aim at being more religious than Christ.

'Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted'. To me this verse has tremendous depth of meaning. Psychologically also we find that the human personality is designed to obtain healing from within by mourning in times of grief and bereavement. In my experiences I have seen people go through experiences similar to bereavement when they lose a limb, a loved one through separation, as when the child goes for the first time to the boarding school far away from one's place. I have seen this happening in instances of separation and divorce. Another situation in which a similar reaction seems to take place is when a person who has established himself, made friends and struck roots in one place, is transferred from that place. All this is quite understandable. You have a right to grieve. You need not be grieving for ever and ever. You will find comfort, you will adjust, you will accept things in time, if you want to. As hurt diminishes hope emerges.

The church has a great opportunity to help people grieve as well as find hope and strength in their faith.

It is very essential that churches in Asia recognize the importance of Counselling as a way of fulfilling its mission. The church must pioneer in areas of service which are currently neglected. The church is called upon not to duplicate efforts of the government but to be a model and instil a vision.

In this new field there is need for collaboration with western churches, learning from them, but at the same

(Continued on page 11).

[JUNE 1979]

# CONVERSION

ELLEN WEBSTER

Women, women, women. One can hardly pick up a magazine these days which hasn't some article or report about women! Why all this attention to women? After all, the Constitution of India guarantees equality of status and of opportunity. International Women's Year has come and gone. Can't the subject be dropped now? The status and position of women might not be equal to that of men, but things are slowly getting better, aren't they? And everyone knows that the situation can't be changed overnight. Women have recommended, suggested, and proposed changes that they would like to see take place in society, the church, family structures, etc. Isn't it time now to get on with the hard work of bringing about these changes instead of just writing about them?

No, the subject of women can't be dropped for many reasons. I'll limit myself to two here. First, as just mentioned, change usually does not occur overnight. And may be we don't want the situation to change too quickly. If it occurs at a slow pace then it won't be too jarring on anyone. But until women come close to achieving equality, they will continue to agitate, protest, work for reform and change. They have been doing this in India since the mid-19th century and there is no reason to believe that they will stop now. Hopefully women will become increasingly more vocal as they become more aware of their situation and hopefully they will enable the pace of change to speed up.

Secondly, the subject of women is vast and multi-faceted. Articles written in the Indian press so far only scratch the surface. For example, church magazines have largely concentrated on the issue of the ordination of women. What about the role and image of women in the history of the Church, how women are viewed by theologians, and women and language? And how do women view themselves? So far women have largely confined themselves to giving reports and making recommendations. But how does a woman herself undergo change and thereby become willing to commit herself to work for the transformation of society and of her position in it?

This is what it might be like for one woman named Ruth. Ruth is reflecting on the women's movement. 'What's all this fuss women are making about wanting change and liberation? I just can't understand them or what they are so angry about. May be they have had bad luck, but I am certainly content. I am happily married with a kind husband and we have two lovely, healthy children. My husband's salary is high enough to enable us to have most of the things we want. I have certainly never felt discriminated against and I have always been grateful I could stay at home and have plenty of time to take care of the family and house. If other women want to have paying jobs outside the home that's all right, but it's not for me. I like my life the way it is.'

Something happened the other day, however, that made me mad. Mary didn't show up for the Bible study

Wednesday afternoon, a time she said was convenient for her. When I asked her what had happened she said her husband had returned home unexpectedly with a group of friends and she had had to serve them tea. Serving tea more important than going to a Bible study! Well, people have their priorities!! But then maybe Mary felt more comfortable serving tea than discussing Acts. By staying home she certainly did what was expected of her, undoubtedly pleased her husband, and probably pleased herself too because she felt she had done the right thing. Nevertheless, the fact remains that we missed Mary's contribution as she always has something worthwhile to say, whether or not she realizes it. Maybe that is just it—women like Mary and me aren't used to participating in discussions except as silent listeners. Of course, if I am asked a question or for my opinion, I will give it, but this doesn't happen very often. I am usually asked to bake a cake for the charity bazaar, but not for my opinion, thoughts, and feelings about matters not directly concerned with the home and family.

I wonder why this is? I am supposed to have the all-important task of taking care of the family and I feel I am doing a competent job. However, in mixed group I notice men don't sit around and listen to women talk about topics related to the home in the same way women often listen silently to make discussions of world affairs. Men praise us for cooking a good meal, but often they don't know what to say after that. Actually this makes me pretty angry. What is wrong with women and men that they don't really know what to say to each other? Are our worlds so separate that we have no interests in common? I'll admit that I take pride in my culinary abilities, but I don't like to think of myself as just a cook. I did go to college many years ago and, although I haven't read much since then, I do feel I'm an educated person and that my views, even if rarely expressed, are as valid as anyone else's. But I guess that because I haven't been willing to speak up, the fault is largely my own. I'll have to make an effort next time I have the chance.

Wait a minute, what have I just said? That I was angry about being thought of just as a cook. Isn't this what feminists are saying? They don't want to be thought of merely in terms of their socially imposed identity (homemaker, mother, wife, etc.) but in terms of their own inner, authentic identity (who they really feel they are as persons in their own right and not in relation to anyone else). I think I'm beginning to understand how they feel!

But why am I questioning my role now? I have been taught by my parents, school church and women's magazines that my role is in the home and I have been happy playing this role. Now I see that, though the role is valued as critically important by society, the one who plays the role is usually valued more for what she does than for who she is.

If I feel this way, what should I do about it? I can certainly talk with my friends to see if they are having similar thoughts and feelings. Most important, however, I think that I will have to try and bring about some changes in myself. This is going to be difficult because I have never really questioned my own attitudes, values, behaviour, role, and purpose in life. It has been easy to accept what society and the Church taught without asking if it were right or wrong for me and for others. Now it is time to stop and really think through some of

these things and to be willing to act on the answers I come up with. For instance, how do I deal with certain biblical statements in light of the inequalities and discriminatory practices which I now realize exist all around me? I'm thinking in particular of: 'In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (Gen. 1:27), and 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3: 27-28).

I can see that this is going to involve some risk—risk to challenge and change some of the familiar secure patterns which have been firmly established in my home and social group. It is never too late to change and if I don't want to be thought of just in terms of my domestic functions and stereotyped role, then I must be willing to take that risk. Change won't come without effort, hard work, courage, and real commitment. But first, I'll have to discover who I am and this will require time and some deep searching. I have already thought from time to time that I was really rational as well as emotional, objective as well as subjective, active as well as passive, and competitive as well as co-operative. Now it is time to assert some of these attributes which are not usually associated with femininity. Perhaps in

my search I'll also discover that I have talents and abilities which have been hidden for years, but if brought to light will reach beyond the home. The more I think about it, the more exciting I think the future could be.

I hope that some of my friends have been thinking along similar lines or, that once we start talking, I'll be able to make them aware of things as I now understand them. I can see that my searching within and desire to change myself and some of my attitudes might be a rather lonely road. I am sure that if I had support and encouragement from other women, and men if possible, it would help and we could travel the road together. When I think about the women's groups that I have been in they are either very spiritual or consist of just small talk and sometimes deteriorate into gossip sessions where we often talk against each other, just like I have been talking against the feminists up until now. If we could support each other instead, I think we could have some power and begin to transform society by removing present inequalities and the forms of discrimination which it practises. I have read that the goal of the women's movement is to build a world where liberty, equality, and love are the guiding principles. I certainly agree with this and would like to have a share in helping to achieve this goal.'

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## *A Word of Caution to Christian Countrymen*

Dear Friends,

The fight for freedom of conscience is on and the part you are playing in it is noble. The mammoth processions and protest marches have been infectious. The idea of protest to protect the guaranteed freedom is being imbued ever more widely. What has been most inspiring about the processions and marches is that they have been orderly, disciplined and peaceful in spite of their size. Not a single untoward incident has been reported from any corner of the country where you have been on the streets to demonstrate your dissent and disapproval of the Freedom of Religion Bill in Parliament. The National Christian Council of India congratulates you on your courage, purposefulness and orderly bearing.

Our Prime Minister on the other hand has disapproved our demonstrations. He has admitted that Mr. Tyagi's bill is facing opposition. He has also expressed his fear that the bill, in the form it is, may not receive the approval of Parliament. But he has expressed his hope too that if not Mr. Tyagi's bill then some other bill of its kind will be enacted for the whole country. That only shows that Mr. Desai is determined to enact the Freedom of Religion bill in one or the other form. One wonders whether the bill has become a matter of prestige for him. Whatever may be the truth he needs our prayer for wisdom and guidance that under his leadership the country may not take any retrograde step.

Our demonstration has indeed been laudable. But it must also be pointed out that we have already made a previous mistake. Many among us have strongly expressed in the press and from the platform that the Freedom of Religion Bill has a bias against the minorities. Permit me please to say that this is a very narrow if not wrong view of the issue. For the bill is not against the rights of any minority community but against the right of all the Indian citizens to freedom of conscience. And freedom of conscience is a basic human right. We are dehumanised once our freedom of conscience is taken away from us.

The question is, what is freedom, and what is freedom of conscience? Freedom can be defined in general as 'absence of compulsion or restraint'. It is the opportunity to do and to be something of value. Similarly freedom of conscience is our right to pursue our own good in our own way as long as we do not deprive others of theirs. Hence freedom of conscience is basic to religious freedom. It is the first step to having a religion. It is the right to choose, it is the option, between worthy objects and values. The exercise of this freedom of conscience ought to be free from any influence of or interference from a civil or temporal authority, subject of course to public morality and order. It is because we agree with these definitions of 'freedom' and 'freedom of conscience' that we are

(Continued on page 15)

[JUNE 1979]

# Tender Loving Care

In this international Year of the Child, schemes are afoot to feed, clothe, immunize and educate children all over the world, especially those belonging to the Third World countries. Journalists are churning out articles by the dozens, Poets are expounding in song and verse the misery of these down-trodden mites, Philanthropists are reaching for their chequebooks quite magnanimously, and Organisations are vying with each other for pride of place among the 'do-gooders'.

It is important that a child should have food for its bodily sustenance, clothes to protect its nakedness and immunization to resist disease. It is equally important that these be dispensed with the priceless ingredient of 'Tender Loving Care', without which other remedies will be successful only up to a point. Total care of the child must provide not only for its physical but also for its emotional and spiritual needs. Emphasis on the physical alone will result in a lopsided development of the child.

This TLC is first received from a child's parents. A mother is usually indulgent, and has few responsibilities to intrude on the nursing care of her child. But where a mother is compelled by necessity to seek employment outside the home, this period of closeness to the child is often curtailed. The rich and the socially-inclined may delegate this responsibility to hired help and are thus free of the incessant demands made by the child.

In the majority of cases however, Home is a dependable base of trust and love, from which well-adjusted children venture forth. These early associations with parents serve as a model for other relationships in life. Where the quality of relationship has been poor, the incidence of psychological upset in the child is high. A family inculcates its values into the young. Quarrelling parents often have neurotic children, who are inevitably thrust into conflict with the outside world.

TLC does not necessarily mean overindulgence. Discipline must form an important part of the long and complex process of bringing up children. 'Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest', says the book of Proverbs, 'Yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul'.

Different societies have different ways of imposing discipline. In many parts of the world physical punishment is meted out, and though in recent years it has been frowned upon by psychologists, Benjamin Spock the champion of permissiveness has finally seen the folly of his philosophy, and has recommended the use of the rod. 'The rod and reproof give wisdom. But a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.' On certain islands in the Atlantic, children are corrected by teasing. But by far the worst form of imposing discipline is by withholding affection. There can be nothing more damaging to the psyche

of a child. Discipline should show one's love and concern for the child and not a means of venting one's anger.

Love sustains. There is a deep and inherent craving for love in every child. A college girl from America once visited an orphanage in Japan.

A little boy asked hopefully 'Are you going to be my mother ?'

'No', she said 'I'm sorry'.

'Will you kiss me anyway?' asked the boy.

Which brings us to the question of TLC in our own Institutions. Our orphanages are filled with parentless children, one-parent children, and those from broken homes. They are fed, clothed and educated. How many of these have pleasant memories of their years in the Orphanages? How many walk through life with a chip on their shoulder? How many resolve to get even with cruel Destiny that has denied them love and security in their young lives?

Do our surrogate fathers and mothers provide the necessary emotional security that a child needs? How many of them have any knowledge of child psychology? A good surrogate parent is one who has time to soothe away a child's fears, or brush his tears away with a kiss; who is quick to encourage and slow to chide, and who inculcates sound and lasting values into his protégé.

The same goes for our Crèches and Schools. All those who are involved in the care of children should be motivated by genuine love, which makes them vulnerable to the pain of these young lives. To love is to strengthen. To love is to give of one's self even beyond the call of duty. For are we not exhorted 'to give, good measure pressed down, shaken together' so that it will be given back to us a thousand fold.

The tender, loving nature of Jesus was aptly manifest in his rebuke to the disciples 'Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God'.

EVA BELL

## Counselling as an Aspect . . .—(Contd. from page 8)

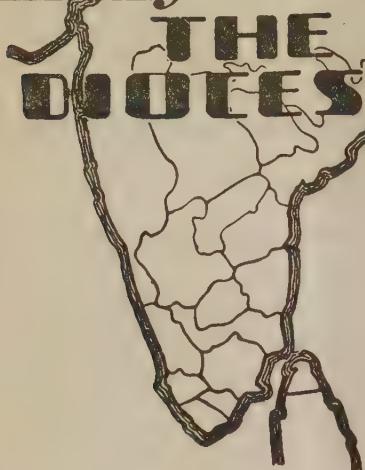
time being creative enough to modify principles and practices of counselling to suit the different contexts of our own life situations. I find myself grappling in many counselling situations, with the universal issues of human concern, with cultural relativity in the expression of these needs and concerns, and the personal reactions of the people which are an important part of their volition or choice. The universal, the cultural and the personal are in a dynamic interaction all the time.

Counselling services in Asia can be an effort to enable people, all people, to realise abundant and dynamic living, realise justice, liberation, and freedom—a part of our service, of the Kingdom.

(Taken from *Witnessing to the Kingdom*—Edited by D. Preman Niles and T. K. Thomas, Published at Christian Conference of Asia, Singapore, February 1979. Pages 64 to 67.)

news from —

# THE DISESSES



## CONSULTATIONS ON 'CHURCH'S MINISTRY TO FAMILIES' REPORT

Madras Christian College Family Life Institute in collaboration with the Community Service Centre held a consultation on 'Church's Ministries to Families' on the 18th of February at the Community Service Centre, 17, Balfour Road, Madras-10.

The aim of this consultation was mainly to highlight the great need for organised ministry by the Church for families facing different kinds of problems because of the rapid social changes.

Thirty people participated in this programme including Rt. Rev. Sundar Clarke and Dr. Masamba ma Mpole, Executive Secretary, Office of Family Ministry, World Council of Churches. Dr. Chandran D. S. Devanesen, Retd. Vice Chancellor of the North Eastern Hill University, presided over both morning and afternoon sessions. As one who was very much alive to the effects of the fast moving changes in society on families, and the need for family ministry, it was Dr. Devanesen who started the Family Life Institute of the Madras Christian College nine years ago as a pioneering project in the field.

Bishop Sundar Clarke opened the consultation with prayer and spoke about the need for helping Christian homes as there are already signs of wear and tear of family life. He stressed that we have to face facts and can no more afford to be self-complacent about the stability of Indian families, and have to be aware of the many forces that prevent happy family living in our society. He expressed his hope that this consultation will bring forth positive suggestions as to how the Church can minister to the needs of Christian homes more effectively.

Dr. Devanesen welcomed the leaders and participants especially Dr. Masamba who was the chief guest speaker at the consultation. He introduced Dr. Masamba as a highly qualified scholar and leader from the third world of whom we have to be proud of.

The first speaker was Mrs. Radha Paul, Head of the department of Social Work at Stella Maris College,

and an experienced social worker involved in the training of social workers. She spoke on the social changes that have affected family life during the past 25 years and also on areas families need help and guidance. She concentrated more on the negative aspects of changes and the many problems families in modern urban society are facing such as increasing isolation, and anonymity, and the resultant loss of identity of families. Old values and traditions which made family life stable in our country are being eroded, and family life has become more self-centered. Old people and children are being neglected, spiritual values have lost its important place in family life, and the problems of working women trying to combine many roles are on the increase. She also stressed on the undesirable effects of mass media like radio, television, the press and the movie. She spoke about the urgency of starting family ministry in an organised manner before it is too late and also mentioned some means by which the church can help families. Some are increased family ministries, family life education, marriage and family counselling.

Mrs. Clara Clarke spoke next on what the Church is doing now in helping families. After briefly referring to the biblical image of the family as reflected in the marriage service, she stressed on the reconciling role of the Church's life of worship and sacrament, the family altar and prayer. Special mention was made on how the pastor and his wife can help families in their parish and how the Christian home festivals can be made more vital and meaningful. She also pointed out the need for marriage counselling and proper pre-marital counselling. The Church has to play a dominant role in helping families to face problems instead of judging and criticising. The Church should take an active part in changing wrong values and attitudes and evil practices and traditions which hinder happy family living.

After these two talks there was a period of active discussion in which many participated.

The afternoon session started with Dr. Masamba's talk on 'Church's ministry to families'. He briefly explained the different ways in which the Family Education Office of the World Council of Churches has been helping Churches in different countries, encouraging regional studies, helping with the training of family counsellors, encouraging family counselling in the local setting, and arranging seminars and theological studies on the Christian family. He stressed the fact that men and women are created in the image of God, and spoke about the need for setting up programmes to help families. The structure of the family is not as important as the relationship. The relationship has to be redemptive as well as liberating. The Church should also not think that families should not change. The family changes in character when society alters its values. But God is in the process of change. He said that the Church as a community in search of truth has a message for families. The Church has to see whether in the emergence of new values in family life we find relationship in families redemptive and liberating. Pastoral care is not given just by the pastor alone, but by the whole Church. The whole community, both the people and the minister, should be incorporated in this redemptive ministry.

Following Dr. Masamba's talk, Mrs. Mary Thomas, Director of the Madras Christian College Family Life Institute spoke about the power of families to change

society and also about the project 'Family Power Social Change' of the World Council of Churches. She said that the family ought not to be a victim of change; as it possesses educational, creative and mobilising power it is a very powerful social unit. Family and society mutually influence one another. Within the family there is power and dynamism which, if properly developed, can direct change. We as families have power to express our faith, realize our dreams, solve problems, and transform aspects of community life that need changing. This is true when families group together in mutual support. A single family can exercise great influence but often it can be more effective in co-operation with other families. Based on this assumption the World Council of Churches formulated the 'Family Power Social Change' project. The main aim of the project is to discover and develop ways and means of enabling families to utilize change for the improvement of the quality of life for individuals in families, to encourage and stimulate theological and biblical studies on marriage, sexuality and family life, to contribute to the renewal of congregational life, and to help Churches to perceive and understand the demonic forces which are disrupting happy family living. Small groups of five to ten families form themselves as primary groups and meet regularly, say once a month or more to study and understand the change in society and the problems families are facing. It is an action oriented project and the group should try to do whatever they can to change situations that need change. This project is not for experts and specialists, but for ordinary people at the grass-root level. She said that she is in-charge of the project here and will be very happy to give assistance needed to form small groups in cities as well as in rural parishes.

The final session of the consultation was a discussion in which most of the members actively participated. It was unanimously decided that the resolutions passed at the discussion be sent to the different Churches with request to implement them.

#### RESOLUTIONS

This consultation recognizes the scope and need for the Church to lay emphasis on Family Ministry considering the problems that families today are facing in a changing society. In order to organise this ministry, we suggest the following:—

1. That the Church have an office of family ministry. This office will deal with issues connected with families and be responsible for arranging programmes to enrich Christian family living.

2. That this ministry will have family counselling services organised at three levels:—

(a) through an interested lay group of members who will be given orientation to family counselling.

(b) through the pastors who may be given refresher training in counselling.

(c) through a specialist counsellor who will deal with problems needing specialised help.

3. That more primary groups of families on the pattern of the World Council of Churches' 'Family Power Social Change' project be started both in the urban as well as rural parishes to understand the changes and problems families are facing and to do

what they can to help themselves and others for happy family living.

The selected group of people interested in family concerns and problems participating in the consultation, Dr. Masamba's presence and contribution which gave a perspective to family ministry in a world wide sense, and Dr. Devanesen's direction and thought provoking comments as the chairman of the consultation contributed to the success of the programme.

MRS. MARY THOMAS

Director

Family Life Institute

Madras Christian College.

#### THE FIRST BISHOP OF KARIMNAGAR DIOCESE

Friday, the 6th April, 1979 was an historic day for the people of the new Diocese of Karimnagar because on that day the consecration of the first Bishop of the Diocese took place.

During the day and night preceding, people flocked to Karimnagar from villages and towns of the new diocese and from other dioceses of South India. A large pandal was erected for a large congregation to assemble in the open-air beside the smaller Karimnagar Church building.

The Bishop Elect, Bishop Prabhudass, is much loved as a minister of the people; his heart went all out to villagers. He is a man of wide experience not only in Andhra but throughout South India. Bishop Prabhudass lectured for some years at the Andhra Theological College and later at the United Theological College, Bangalore; he was one of the pioneers in the work of Kindernothlife; he is the Synod member on the Women's Fellowship Committee; and he has had experience in many other fields of Church work in India. He has also had experience of Christian work in England. In all spheres of service he has been most ably supported by his wife, Sally, who is well-known for leadership among the women of the C.S.I.

The consecration Service began promptly at 9 a.m. The Moderator, the Most Rev. N. D. Ananda Rao Samuel led the service and in his sermon stressed our utter dependance upon God-God will fulfil all our needs if we rely on Him. He will give us the love and patience and grace as we have need of them if we open our hearts and depend on him.

The Deputy Moderator spoke of a Bishop as a father to his people. Just as a father must be prepared to suffer kicks from a son so must a Bishop be ready to suffer and yet offer love in return.

The examination of the Bishop Elect as he stood before the Moderator was a very impressive part of the service. The very searching questions and the sincere answers were clearly heard by all. After this the Moderator, the other Bishops present and three presbyters took part in the laying on of hands on the head of the Bishop Elect as the Moderator spoke the words of Consecration. There followed the presentation of the Bible and the Pastoral Staff, the Bishop's

Chain and Cross and the saffron stole. Three lay representatives shared in the installation of the Bishop and this was followed by the lifting up of the voices of the congregation in the Doxology. The Rev. K. Ratnam led us meaningfully in the prayers of intercession.

At the Communion Service Bishop Prabhudass took communion together with his wife, two of their sons, their daughter and his mother-in-law. They were followed by members of the clergy, then by hundreds of communicants who came forward and received the bread and wine. An impressive service and the final hymn 'The Church's One Foundation' was sung from our hearts and made a fitting end to this memorable service.

At the Public Meeting and Reception held in the evening many greetings were received by the new Bishop from his friends in this country and abroad. Personal messages and loving greetings were brought by many representatives of the different branches of the Church in India. After the greetings came the garlanding! It was a happy occasion when hundreds of people from all walks of life, expressed their love and affection as they joyfully garlanded their new 'Thandrigaru' and Mrs. Prabhudass.

Finally Bishop Prabhudass spoke a word of thanks in response to all the greetings and in conclusion said that his desire as Bishop was to preach, to teach and to serve.

The Public Meeting was followed by a very enjoyable cultural programme of song and dance performed by Karimnagar Hostel Children—a fitting climax to a wonderful day.

(Sd.) J. Ross.

## PROTESTING FREEDOM OF RELIGION BILL

Over 20,000 Christians of all denominations of Hubli City assembled on the Sacred Heart Convent grounds at Keshwapur, Hubli on 9-4-1979 to protest against the 'Freedom of Religion Bill 1978' tabled by Om Prakash Tyagi, M.P. All the 17 Christian pastors and 4 Catholic priests were present. The Congregation was addressed by Shri J. T. Mathias, Ex-Mayor of Hubli-Dharwar Municipal Corporation, Rev. V.P. Dandin, Secretary of Karnataka Northern Diocese, Mr. N.C. Barnabas, Ex-Vice Mayor of Hubli-Dharwar Municipal Corporation. The speakers explained the salient features of the Freedom of Religion Bill and how it would affect the Fundamental Rights of Christians, guaranteed under Article 25 (1) and 26 of the Constitution of India. They also felt that provisions of the Bill would create sinister implications for the Minorities, particularly Christians if the Bill is passed.

The speakers were also convinced that the conversions which might take place as result of exposition of Christian tenets would be claimed by anti-Christians and those opposed to Christianity, to have been done by force, fraud, and material allurements, and that the latter would not hesitate to harass Christians and foist false cases against missionaries and Christian leaders,

fabricating false evidence by foul and illegal methods. They told the audience that there are already ample provisions in the Constitution and penal Code to guard against conversions from one faith to another by force, fraud and inducements. The Bill, they said, was unnecessary and uncalled for.

All the Christians assembled, unanimously passed a resolution appealing to the President of India, Prime Minister of India and all the leaders of Political parties not to support the Bill.

After the meeting the Christians went in a silent procession to the Taluk Office along the main streets and presented the Memorandum to the Tahsildar. Some representatives of the Christian Community proceeded to Dharwar and presented a Memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner. This Demonstration made by Christians clearly indicated their unity and solidarity in all matters pertaining to their religion.

*Reporter*

Mr. P. S. DHAWALE

Member of Steering Committee

## ACTION AGAINST BILL

National Christian Council  
of India  
Nagpur-440 001  
24th March, 1979

Members of  
The National Christian  
Council of India and  
Heads of Churches.

Dear Friends,

1. Representatives of Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and the National Christian Council of India met in Delhi on March 22nd, 1979 to consider appropriate steps to be taken by the CBCI and the NCCI in regard to the Arunachal Freedom of Religion Act 1978. The joint meeting,

**Resolved that :**

- (a) a writ petition be filed in Supreme Court of India jointly by the CBCI and the NCCI challenging the validity of the said Act,
- (b) further advice be solicited from other Jurists in order to strengthen the case further before approaching the Supreme Court,
- (c) the CBCI and the NCCI Secretariats be authorised to take the necessary steps for implementing the above decision,
- (d) the Supreme Court be urged to reopen its earlier decision upholding similar Acts of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa.

2. To implement this decision it was decided in the joint meeting to appoint a Central Action Committee of three representatives each from the CBCI and NCCI which should meet at the earliest possible to plan strategy and action.

It has also been decided to :

- (i) Promote statewise action committees jointly of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox and others to plan and execute appropriate action at state and local levels.
- (ii) Place a petition before the Minorities Commission to look into the harassment and discrimination against Christians as a result of the implementation of Arunachal Freedom of Religion Act.
- (iii) Mobilise and enlist the support of Christians in all states, especially in states where Christians are in substantial numbers.
- (iv) Galvanizing the support of people of other faiths who are supporters of democracy and secularity.
- (v) To observe at an appropriate time a day of prayer and fasting by all Christians in the country as a mark of protest against the said Act.

3. A petition has been signed by all who attended the joint meeting and submitted to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha stating objections to the Freedom of Religion Act.

#### A Word of Caution . . . .—(Contd. from page 10)

opposed to Mr. Tyagi's bill and the different Freedom of Religion Acts. We oppose them because they abridge the freedom of conscience guaranteed to Indian citizens, not because they curtail minority rights.

We oppose these legislative measures also because they corrode the secularity of the country. Every citizen has the right to change his faith. It is the citizen's sacred and inviolable right. The State's interference in the exercise of this right cannot be tolerated. Neither can the State be made the guardian of the conscience of the citizens. Hence we not only oppose these Acts and Bill but also appeal to all those who are eager to promote the spirit of secularity in India to oppose them.

These legislative measures grant very wide powers to the State and the police which could be the beginning, the first step, toward totalitarianism. Unlimited power makes the State oppressive. We have not forgotten Mrs. Gandhi's emergency yet. Once bitten, twice shy. We do not want to be trapped again. Therefore we stand against these measures. My Christian countrymen are therefore asked to perceive the real threat embodied in the Freedom of Religion Bill and Acts. Even if there is some lurking danger to minorities' rights it places into nothingness in comparison to the threat therein to the fundamental rights of all the citizens.

We need to observe yet another caution. We should not attempt anything that might undermine the spirit of Christian service given to the needy in selfless love. A few already brand as 'inducement' our services to the people in need. There may be attempts to discredit our services further. But let us not relent even under malevolent attacks. Let us continue our services as far as possible. Whatever the nature of the pressure a Christian cannot condone the denial of services to the innocent and needy. Neither can error be destroyed except by countering it with love. Let us remember

that love can be crucified, but it can never be vanquished or annihilated.

Lastly, let us do our best to draw people closer to us by giving a clear and honest statement of our principles and stand without diffidence or arrogance and in keeping with the demands of our faith, so that we may allay peoples' fears and dissipate bias ignorance by means of our love, truth, enlightenment and humility. May God grant that we bring glory to Christ in all that we plan and do.

Yours in His Service,

REV. M. A. Z. ROLSTON  
*General Secretary*

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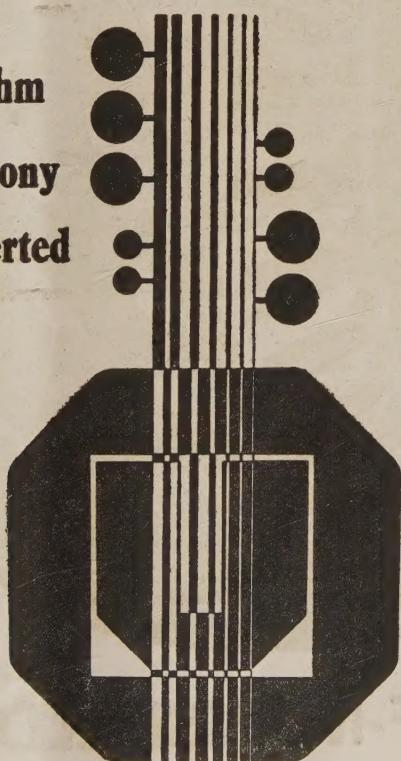
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